

## Coal Energy project

West Virginia University, along with a coal company, has formed a partnership to commercialize carbon products. See page 3A.



# THE LOGAN BANNER

FOUR SECTIONS - 32 PAGES Vo. 118 No. 36

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2005

USPS 317-620

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## WVU business incubator helps fuel coal energy project



Photo by Jim Bissett

WVU's partnership with Advanced Carbon Technologies could put the Mountain State on the map as a global leader in carbon technology, which taps into coal for new ways of making energy sources and other byproducts. Signing a letter of intent are (seated, from left to right), company founder Jack Henry and Dr. John D. Weete, WVU vice president of research and development. Looking on (from left) are: company board member Jack Maxwell; Bill Pollock, director of WVU's Office of Technology Transfer; WVU carbon products researcher Elliot Kennel; company associate Bret Chandler; Morgantown businessman Mac Warner, who is also assisting the company; and WVU research associate Dusty Gwinn.

## Banner Staff Report

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — A partnership inked between West Virginia University and a regional coal company formed to commercialize carbon product technologies just might have the world heading for the hills in the next few years — as the global demand for energy sources becomes more and more pressing.

Officials with WVU's Office of Technology Transfer have formally signed a letter of intent to work with Advanced Carbon Products LLC, a Cross Lanes, W.Va., company that wants to enlist WVU technology for bold, new ways of using coal — the Mountain State's chief resource.

WVU faculty Peter Stansberry, Al Stiller and John Zondlo have worked with their students to devise several ways to make durable, lightweight carbon "foams" from coal that are heat-resistant and strong enough to even be used as armor plating for military vehicles — along with a host of other products.

Advanced Carbon Products has a virtual presence in the WVU Business Incubator as an online company.

The letter of intent sets the stage for the company to license and commercialize WVU's carbon product technologies.

There's a ready source of coal to fuel the research, said Elliot Kennel, administrative coordinator for carbon products research at WVU.

America currently produces 30 million tons of carbon products a year, Kennel said, mainly from feedstocks that come from petroleum.

"That's the equivalent of 200 million barrels of petroleum," Kennel said. "We are developing environmentally clean and highly economical processes so that 'clean coal' can be used to replace most, if not all, of that petroleum. West Virginia has the potential and the promise to

be a world leader in the carbon products industry. With the support of WVU, the state and lots of good people, it is going to happen."

"We want to see good-paying jobs created here," Advanced Carbon Products founder Jack Henry said. "We would like to see graduates of WVU and our other fine colleges and universities to be able to live here and raise their families here, and we hope that our efforts to create businesses around WVU's carbon products will accomplish just that."

Henry was a longtime businessman who ran several coal wholesale operations along the Ohio River when he walked away to become a church pastor. Now he's preaching the gospel of economic development, saying solid jobs make for solid family life.

Bill Pollock, who heads WVU Office of Technology Transfer (an operation that facilitates the commercialization of technologies generated through research), agreed — and said the arrangement between WVU and Advanced Carbon Products couldn't be better.

"It's such an opportunity," Pollock said. "The company has a good, workable business plan, and a lot of experienced business people are behind it."

Dr. John D. Weete, WVU's vice president of research and economic said the relationship "has a high probability of success," because it takes in an innovative company, a state rich in coal and coal experts, and the research might of West Virginia's flagship university.

"This partnership builds upon one of WVU's research strengths and a traditional economic strength of the state," Weete said. "And that's not only because of the presence of coal as a natural resource, but also because of the industrial infrastructure and human resources that have grown up around it. West Virginia has

tremendous expertise in mining, coal processing and engineering — making this a very attractive location for companies seeking to develop coal-based processes."

The state, Weete said, also has a resource on Capitol Hill in the form of Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the senior lawmaker who secured the funds to support WVU's carbon products programs over the past several years.

"We are so very grateful to Sen. Byrd," Weete said. "His support has made it possible to make advances in carbon product technology. So many things are falling into place here. We are looking forward to this letter of intent being the beginning of a long-term relationship that has economic benefits to West Virginia."